

SECTION III—REMARKS

This amendment is submitted in response to the Office Action mailed September 26, 2006. Claims 1, 11 and 16 are amended and new claims 23-26 are added. The amended claims find support in the specification at least at paragraph [0022]. Claims 1-26 remain pending in the application. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the application and allowance of all pending claims in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Drawing Objections

The Examiner objected to the drawings. According to the Examiner, Figure 1 should be designated by a legend such as --Prior Art-- because only that which is old is illustrated. The Examiner also indicated that labels at the center of each of Figures 1, 2 and 3 are unreadable.

Applicants have included herewith replacement sheets in which the legend --Prior Art-- has been added to figure 1, and in which the labels at the center of each of Figures 1, 2 and 3 have been made readable. Applicants submit that these changes overcome the Examiner's objections.

Claim Objections

The Examiner objected to claims 17-20 for being dependent on a rejected base claim, but indicated that these claims would be allowable if re-written in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

New claim 23 combines the features of claim 17 with those of its base claim, claim 16. Applicants submit that new claim 23 is therefore allowable. Claim 24 depends from claim 23 and is therefore allowable for at least the same reasons.

New claim 25 combines the features of claim 19 with those of its base claim, claim 16. Applicants submit that new claim 25 is therefore allowable. Claim 26 depends from claim 25 and is therefore allowable for at least the same reasons.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Examiner rejected claims 1-11, 13 and 15 as anticipated under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) by U.S. Patent No. 6,948,619 to Su *et al.* (“*Su*”). Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner’s rejections. A claim is anticipated only if each and every element, as set forth in the claim, is found in a single prior-art reference. MPEP § 2131; *Verdegaal Bros. v. Union Oil of California*, 2 U.S.P.Q.2d 1051, 1053 (Fed. Cir. 1987). As explained below, *Su* cannot anticipate these claims because it does not disclose every element and limitation recited therein.

Claim 1, as amended, recites a process combination including:

determining a location of one or more regions on a reticle that come in contact with a reticle handling or support surface; and

generating a pattern to be written on the reticle, the pattern including one or more cut-out regions corresponding to the one or more regions that have been determined to come in contact with the reticle handling or support surface; and

adjusting the position, size or shape of one or more of the cut-out regions in the pattern to avoid conflict between the one or more cut-out regions and a required feature of the reticle.

(italics added). *Su* discloses a reticle support and a reticle support 34 that includes pins 42 to support the reticle (col. 5, lines 47-50). The reticle 44 includes an opaque metallic layer 46 in which four cuts 48 are made in the areas where support pins are supposed to come in contact with the reticle (col. 5, lines 59-62), and pins 42 and cuts 48 match in both size and shape (Figure 4(b); col. 5, lines 65-68). *Su* therefore cannot disclose, teach or suggest a combination including “adjusting the position, size or shape of one or more of the cut-out regions in the pattern to avoid conflict between the one or more cut-out regions and a required feature of the reticle.” Applicants submit that *Su* therefore cannot anticipate claim 1 and respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of the claim.

Claim 11, as amended, recites an apparatus combination including:

a circuit pattern to be exposed on a wafer; and

one or more chrome cut-out regions positioned where a reticle handling or support apparatus has been determined to come in contact with the reticle, wherein *the position, size or shape of one or more of the cut-out regions can be adjusted to avoid conflict between the one or more cut-out regions and a required feature of the reticle.*

(italics added). By analogy to the discussion above for claim 1, Applicants submit that *Su* cannot disclose, teach or suggest a combination including a reticle wherein “the position, size or shape of one or more of the cut-out regions can be adjusted to avoid conflict between the one or more cut-out regions and a required feature of the reticle.” Applicants submit that *Su* therefore cannot anticipate claim 11 and respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of the claim.

As to claims 2-10 and 12-15, if an independent claim allowable, then any claim depending therefrom is also allowable. *See generally* MPEP § 2143.03; *In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071 (Fed. Cir. 1988). As discussed above, claims 1 and 11, as amended, are in condition for allowance. Applicants submit that claims 2-10 and 12-15 are therefore allowable by virtue of their dependence on allowable independent claims, as well as by virtue of the features recited therein. Applicants therefore respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections and allowance of these claims.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner rejected claims 12, 14, 16, 21 and 22 under 35 U.S.C § 103(a) as obvious in view of, and therefore unpatentable over, *Su* in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,848,876 to Babbs *et al.* (“*Babbs*”). Applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner’s rejections. To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, three criteria must be met: (1) the prior art references must teach or suggest all the claim limitations; (2) some suggestion or motivation to combine the references must be found in the prior art; and (3) there must be a reasonable expectation of success. MPEP § 2143. For at least the reasons explained below, Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner has not established a *prima facie* case of obviousness.

Claim 16, as amended, recites a process combination including:

writing a pattern on a blank reticle having a layer of photoresist and a layer of chrome, the pattern including one or more cut-out regions that have been determined to come in contact with a reticle handling or support apparatus, *wherein the position, size or shape of one or more of the cut-out regions in the pattern can be adjusted to avoid*

conflict between the one or more cut-out regions and a required feature of the reticle;

developing the pattern to remove the photoresist layer and reveal the chrome layer in the regions determined to come in contact with the reticle handling or support apparatus; and

etching away the chrome layer to remove chrome from the regions determined to come in contact with the reticle handling or support apparatus.

(italics added). The Examiner alleges that *Su* discloses every element and limitation of this claim, except for the photoresist layer. The examiner cites *Babbs* to make up for this deficiency in *Su*, and concludes that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to combine *Su* with *Babbs* to arrive at the claimed invention.

Applicants respectfully disagree. As discussed above for claims 1 and 11, *Su* does not disclose, teach or suggest a process combination wherein “the position, size or shape of one or more of the cut-out regions in the pattern can be adjusted to avoid conflict between the one or more cut-out regions and a required feature of the reticle.” *Babbs* similarly does not disclose such a feature, and the combination of *Su* and *Babbs* therefore cannot obviate the claim. Applicants therefore respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of the claim.

Regarding claims 17-22, if an independent claim is non-obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103, then any claim depending therefrom is also non-obvious. MPEP § 2143.03; *In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071 (Fed. Cir. 1988). As discussed above, claim 16 is in condition for allowance. Applicants submit that claims 17-22 are therefore allowable by virtue of their

dependence on an allowable independent claim, as well as by virtue of the features recited therein. Applicants therefore respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections and allowance of these claims.

Conclusion

Given the above amendments and accompanying remarks, all claims pending in the application are in condition for allowance. If the undersigned attorney has overlooked a teaching in any of the cited references that is relevant to allowance of the claims, the Examiner is requested to specifically point out where such teaching may be found. Further, if there are any informalities or questions that can be addressed via telephone, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned attorney at (206) 292-8600.

Charge Deposit Account

Please charge our Deposit Account No. 02-2666 for any additional fee(s) that may be due in this matter, and please credit the same deposit account for any overpayment.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: 12-12-06



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Enclosures: Postcard
Amendment transmittal, in duplicate
Replacement figures 1, 2 and 3